

Watch, play, and share the fun: sports and entertainment throughout Indiana.

By Sally Campbell Grout

If you love sports, the best position to play can be spectator. You get to share the thrills and never stop eating popcorn. Or maybe you'd rather share the excitement of a big show. Or find your own game to play. No matter how you define adrenalin-raising entertainment, Indiana can accommodate.

Where the pros play.

To see athletes at their best, you'll find the state's greatest concentration of professional athletes in the capital city, Indianapolis. However, you'll find other venues throughout the state that welcome you to watch the pros in action.

Indianapolis' "all stars" include professional basketball, baseball, football...if someone plays it, Indy residents will cheer for it. At Conseco Fieldhouse (317-917-2500), fans enjoy the NBA Pacers and the WNBA Fever. This incredible, comfortable venue has married a vintage look to state-of-the-art space, and also presents concerts, shows and other events throughout the year. The Indianapolis Indians (317-269-3542), a Triple A team currently affiliated with the Pittsburgh Pirates, play at the celebrated Victory Field. Opened in 1996, Victory Field has been called the "best minor league ballpark in America." And playing their home games at the RCA Dome (317-262-3400), the NFL Indianapolis Colts get better with age.

Outside of Indianapolis, Fort Wayne holds its own as a home for pro-sports teams. Here, you can watch the Fort Wayne Fever (260-469-3019) play soccer at Hefner Field; the Fort Wayne Wizards (260-482-6400) play baseball at Memorial Stadium; the Fort Wayne Freedom (260-422-2293) play indoor football; and the Fort Wayne Komets (260-483-1111) play hockey. Both the Freedom and the Komets play at Memorial Coliseum, which also hosts concerts and shows.

In Lake County, fans are cheering for baseball's Gary SouthShore Railcats (219-882-BALL). This relatively new team plays at the USS Steel Yard, which is considered one of the country's top minor league parks.

Evansville's Roberts Stadium (812-476-1383) is a venue with many personalities. During the school year, it serves as the home court for the University of Evansville Basketball team. It's also home to the

Evansville BlueCats, a semi-pro indoor football team. However, fans can fill up to 12,500 seats to see concerts and shows, too.

At Hoosier Park Race Track (800-526-RACE) in Anderson, it's perfectly acceptable to call the athletes beautiful--without the risk of offending anyone. Here, you can catch harness and thoroughbred racing, special events, family activities, and year-round simulcasting. Indiana Downs (317-421-0000) in Shelbyville also offers live racing, year-round simulcasting, a family pavilion, and outdoor pavilion, suites, a clubhouse, and dining.

Where playing is only part of the fun.

Two of the nation's most striking bodies of water are found around Indiana borders: Lake Michigan, to the north, and the Ohio River, to the south. Along with helping shape the state, what do these natural wonders have in common? They're where you find Indiana's exciting casinos. And while every casino offers plenty of games, they all offer their own unique combination of food, entertainment, and fun.

In Northern Indiana: Resorts East Chicago Casino & Hotel (219-378-3000) has free weekend entertainment in the pavilion and a festive "Mardi Gras" setting. Horseshoe Casino in Hammond (219-473-7000) has five dining establishments, including Jack Binion's Steakhouse. At Gary's Buffington Harbor, you'll find two fun casinos side by side: Majestic Star Casino (888-2-B-LUCKY) has concerts, entertainment, special events, live sports simulcasts, and five restaurants, while Trump Hotel and Casino (888-21-TRUMP) has eight restaurants, including the yummy Chops Steakhouse. East of Lake County, in LaPorte County, you'll find Michigan City's Blue Chip Casino (888-879-7711) and Blue Chip Hotel, home of plenty of games. William B's Steakhouse is a favorite spot for dinner.

You'll find four more casinos in Southern Indiana: In Lawrenceburg, Argosy Casino and Hotel (888-274-6797) offers games, specialty restaurants, a sports bar, and a 300-room hotel. Evansville's Casino Aztar (812-433-4390) has live entertainment nightly, five fabulous restaurants, and a luxury hotel. At Belterra Casino Resort (888-235-8377) in Belterra, take the word "resort" seriously. Along with playing the games, you can unwind in one of 608 rooms, five restaurants, the golf course, the spa, and the salon. And at Grand Victoria Casino & Resort (800-GRAND-11) in Rising Sun, you'll find a hotel, several restaurants, and Southern Indiana's only Scottish links-style golf course.

Sit back and applaud.

There's something invigorating about live theater. Maybe it's knowing that there are no second takes, and that the performers have to give it

100% right here, right now, to get that heartfelt round of applause. Here are a few places where live shows practically guarantee your hands will get tired from clapping.

In Lafayette/West Lafayette, Purdue University offers the community a couple of great ways to catch top-notch entertainment. Purdue Convocations (800-914-SHOW) bring a variety of live, professional shows to the area, including Broadway musicals, chamber music, dance, opera, and rock, pop, and country concerts. Purdue Theatre (800-914-SHOW) offers you the opportunity to see rising stars in the making. This professional theater training program presents main-stage and studio productions.

In Bloomington, Indiana University also brings top performers to town at the beautiful IU Auditorium (812-855-1103). Some of the events coming up on the schedule include Broadway shows *Chicago* and *Mamma Mia*, comedian David Spade, and *Chimes of Christmas*. Arrive early so you have time to explore the building. The IU Auditorium is home to Thomas Hart Benton's "Century of Progress" murals painted for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, the Dailey Family Memorial Collection of Hoosier Art, and two Robert Laurent sculptures.

Built in the 1940s by Wabash native and co-founder of Honeywell, Inc. Marc C. Honeywell, The Honeywell Center in Wabash (800-626-6345) continues to bring arts, entertainment, and a certain element of athletics to community. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. In 1994, the building was expanded to include a the 1,500 seat Ford Theater, Carpenter Plaza, Clark Gallery, Garver Sculpture Plaza, and the Olivette Room, which is a partial replica of Mr. Honeywell's 1930s yacht. Today, the theater presents a variety of programming, while the building is also home to an art gallery and a skating rink.

Residents of northwest Indiana frequently welcome big-name entertainers to Star Plaza Theatre in Merrillville (219-769-6600). At this 3,400-seat venue, the furthest seat in the auditorium is only 120 feet from the stage thrust, meaning audience members get a pretty good look at their favorite stars. What's more, Star Plaza Theatre packs a full schedule of shows. Just a few of the performers schedule to appear before 2005 is over include Travis Tritt, Jo Dee Messina, Drew Carey and the Improv All Stars, The Temptations, and the Andy Williams Christmas Show.

When Broadway comes to Indianapolis, it usually arrives at one of these venues: Clowes Memorial Hall (317-940-6444) or the Murat Centre (317-239-5151). Built in 1963, Clowes is located on the campus of

Butler University, and is also the home of resident companies such as the Indianapolis Opera, the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and the Butler Ballet. The Murat Centre opened in 1910; an addition in 1922 nearly doubled its size. The building was given an “overhaul” in the mid-1990s. Today, it’s listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Like Clowes, the Murat Centre welcomes not only Broadway performances, but concerts and other shows as well.

Fans of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (317-262-1159) can usually find them in one of two places. During the summer, the ISO often performs outdoors at Conner Prairie in Fishers. However, its permanent home is at Hilbert Circle Theatre in downtown Indianapolis. Like so many Indiana theaters, Hilbert Circle Theatre also has a rich history. Opened in 1916 as one of the nation’s first grand movie palaces, it also welcomed many world-famous entertainers, including Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra, and Dizzy Gillespie. And, like many theatres, it faced possible demolition in the late 20th century. Today, thanks to the efforts and generosity of Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indianapolis, the Commission for Downtown, Indianapolis Power and Light Company, and Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Hilbert, the building once known as Circle Theatre is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Stand up and cheer.

To find more sporting events and exciting entertainment throughout the state, visit enjoyindiana.com.